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NE = needs editing

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Chapter 8 (Haven't started yet)

Will be more chapters soon...

Thunderclan Allegiance

Leader - Bluestar (Blue-grey she-cat with silver fur around muzzle)

Deputy - Redtail (Small tortoiseshell Tom with a ginger tail)

Medicine Cat - Spottedleaf (dark tortoiseshell she-cat with a dappled coat)

Warriors:

- Lionheart (magnificent golden tabby with thick fur like a lion's mane)

- Tigerclaw (large muscular dark brown tabby Tom with long claws)

- Whitestorm (large white Tom)

- Darkstripe (sleek black and grey tabby Tom)

- Longtail (pale tabby Tom with dark black stripes and an unusually long tail)

- Runningwind (swift brown tabby Tom with long legs)

- Willowpelt (very pale she-cat with distinctive blue eyes)

- Mousefur (small dusky brown she-cat)

Apprentices: (**training to be warriors**)

- Dustpaw (dark brown tabby Tom // Mentor = Redtail)

- Graypaw (fluffy solid grey tom // Mentor = Lionheart)

- Sandpaw (sleek pale ginger she-cat // Mentor - Whitestorm)

- Firepaw (a bright ginger tom with distinctive forest green eyes)

Queens: (**She-cats expecting or nursing kits**)

- Frostfur (White coated fur and blue eyes)

- Brindleface (pretty grey tabby she-cat)

- Goldenflower (pale ginger she-cat)

- Speckletail (pale tabby and the oldest queen)

Elders: (retired warriors or queens)

- Halftail (large dark brown tabby Tom with part of his tail missing)

- Smallear (gray Tom with very small ears, oldest Tom in Thunderclan)

- Patchpelt (small black and white patched pelt)

- One-eye (pale grey she-cat, partially bling & deaf, oldest she-cat in

Thunderclan)

- Dappletail (tortoiseshell she-cat with a dappled coat)

Chapter 1

Tigerclaw looked down at Redtail's body, it was soaked in blood and sprawled out over the damp grass. His once bright yellow eyes, now clouded and lifeless.

Tigerclaw felt his legs tremble a little, he had to do this, Redtail was in his way, in the way of his bright and powerful future. Tigerclaw tried to ignore the cold stone of guilt that sat at the bottom of his stomach. *Warriors never show weakness*, Tigerclaw told himself sternly.

Yet, he couldn't help feeling sorrow swell up inside him at the sight of his old friend's dead body lying below him. Tigerclaw felt his throat close tight with grief. *Why?* Why did he do this..just for some future filled with respect and power. What was the use, no cat would ever give him respect if he killed every cat.

It's your destiny..every cat will fear and worship you once you assert your dominance, and the only way to do that is death. A small dark voice whispered inside his head, but Tigerclaw pushed it back immediately. *No..There must be a different way to gain power.*

...

Tigerclaw was about to enter Thunderclan camp but stopped in his tracks. He had picked up Redtail's body and had gently dragged in back, hoping that Redtail's spirit up in starclan now would forgive Tigerclaw, though he doubted that.

He had thought about rolling around in a patch of sweet smelling flowers to rid of the reek scent of blood and death, but saw no use in it, as he and a Thunderclan patrol had just been in a ferocious battle against Riverclan for sunningrocks.

Tigerclaw grimaced at the memory, Oakheart's smug face as he had yowled loudly upon standing in their new proclaimed territory, sunningrocks. *We will win it back again, just you wait Riverclan.*

Tigerclaw vowed fiercely.

Just as he was about to enter camp, he smelled kittypet. The fur on Tigerclaw's back began to spike up, what was a kittypet doing in Thunderclan camp!?

He quickened his pace and saw just about the whole of Thunderclan huddled close to together, he heard Bluestar's familiar voice addressing her clan.

As soon as he entered, he assumed that the reek of blood was very strong, as every cat turned their heads and faced Tigerclaw, most of them had disbelief on their face, though a few had pure rage. Tigerclaw felt his tail droop, how was he going tell them how this happened?

Tigerclaw placed Redtail's body gently down in the centre of the clearing and everyone gathered around, all mourning the death of this great, noble deputy. Tigerclaw felt his insides churn with grief and regret. He couldn't bare the pain, he quickly turned away and started to slowly walk away from the mourning cats, then he saw Graypaw and a small, plump looking orange tabby tom.

Tigerclaw sniffed, then realised with shock; *this is the kittypet! What's he doing here?! And why doesn't he have a collar?* Tigerclaw walked over to the two young toms, he heard Graypaw telling the kittypet about the clans ancestors, starclan, and what happens when a warrior dies.

"Oh, Tigerclaw! Your back, we heard the news about Sunningrocks and Redtail.." Graypaw finished quietly, looking down at his paws. The orange Tom next to Graypaw nudged him sympathetically.

"Who are you?" Tigerclaw blurted out, suspicion clouding his mind.

"Oh, uh..I'm Firepaw. I just joined Thunderclan, Bluestar, Whitestorm and Lionheart brought me in. I was a kittypet, and I lived in one of the houses next to your territory." He smiled politely at Tigerclaw.

"Where's your collar then?" Tigerclaw stepped closer to the tom,

feeling the fur along his spine prickle with suspicion.

"I did have a collar but it got ripped off with the fight I had with Longtail," Firepaw gestured his tail over to Longtail, who was crouching near the medicine cat den with a big scowl on his face, he had a big tear in his ear, it was bleeding heavily, "Longtail, didn't like the idea of me joining, so he challenged me and uh..yeah." Firepaw finished with a nervous glance at Tigerclaw.

Tigerclaw felt angry that this kittypet had hurt his clan mate, but he couldn't help feel quite surprised that he had beaten a trained Thunderclan warrior on his first fight. "Well, touch any of my clan mates again and you'll know what a real fight is like, kittypet," Tigerclaw growled lowly, and Firepaw's eyes widened with fear.

Tigerclaw didn't wait for a reply, he had thought he heard a mumble from Firepaw saying "My name is *Firepaw."* but dismissed it with a careless flick of his tail and turned and walked over to the Medicine cat den.

Tigerclaw padded past Longtail and touched his shoulder with the tip of his tail, "Recovering well?" Tigerclaw mocked softly and Longtail glared at him, muttering harshly under his breath.

Tigerclaw lowered his head and walked through the entrance to the medicine den, he breathed deeply and his mouth started to water at the scent of herbs. He looked around and blinked, trying to adjust to the dim glow of the medicine den, then he spotted the beautiful dark tortoiseshell pelt of the medicine cat, Spottedleaf.

She glanced over her shoulder and her ears flicked up when she saw him waiting at the entrance. "Oh Tigerclaw, just the cat I wanted to see" She purred and padded over to him. She gestured with her tail to a small dark shape laying still in one of the moss beds at the back of then den.

Tigerclaw looked at Spottedleaf with confusion, she had only sadness in her yellow eyes. "I'm sorry Tigerclaw, but Ravenpaw was heavily injured in the battle against Riverclan, he may not survive..."

Chapter 2

Tigerclaw felt his blood run cold, the battle against Riverclan must have been even more dangerous than he thought. "Will he be able to do apprentice training?" Tigerclaw rumbled with to break the silence.

"Hm..I'm not sure, we'll have to see. I think he might survive..but the recovery could take moons!" Spottedleaf's tail drooped and her shoulders sagged down, as if she were accepting defeat. Tigerclaw stared intently at the young she-cat, he'd never seen her like this.

"Spottedleaf, you're the best medicine cat Thunderclan has ever seen, of course Ravenpaw will be ok." Spottedleaf looked up at him, dipping her head in thanks.

"Cya' round', Spottedleaf" Tigerclaw waved his tail in goodbye as he exited the den, Spottedleaf meowed after him; "Thank you Tigerclaw! Come back soon!"

Tigerclaw looked around, he saw Bluestar sitting under high rock, a dark look resting on her face, she seemed to be staring into nothingness.

Tigerclaw bounded up to her, she glanced up at him and sighed. "How is Ravenpaw?" She asked, her gaze flickering to something else in the camp.

"He's injured severely, but Spottedleaf will be able to heal him, it just might take a few moons," Tigerclaw finished, looking down at Bluestar to see her reaction. She just closed her eyes and breathed in deeply. Then she shook herself and stood up, Tigerclaw noticed how old she must be getting. "I must choose a new deputy, before it becomes moon high." Bluestar leapt up onto the high rock, her week bones straining in protest as she climbed up.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey please gather around the high rock for a clan meeting!" Bluestar yowled aloud,

immediately all the cats who had been mourning the death of Redtail gathered by the high rock, they all looked up at her with gloomy eyes.

"Our deputy, Redtail, has sadly joined our starry ancestors tonight, may starclan welcome him and may he live in peace, we will always remember his noble sacrifice. He died fighting like a Thunderclan warrior, protecting us against Riverclan," Tigerclaw's insides churned with guilt..*Redtail didn't die fighting Riverclan..he was murdered,* a voice whispered in his head,

"As such, Thunderclan needs a new deputy! I have thought about this thoroughly and I have made my decision...

Lionheart,

do you accept the role as deputy, and swear to fight for your clan, even at the cost of your own life?" Bluestar looked down at the big furry warrior, Lionheart looked honoured.

"I do" Lionheart humbly replied back, every cat in the clan was murmuring happily to each other, they all seemed happy about the choice of Lionheart becoming deputy, he was one of the most respected warriors in Thunderclan and had served them for a long time, he deserved it.

But Tigerclaw still couldn't help feeling a rush of anger and jealousy pulse through his veins, *I am a great warrior and also have served Thunderclan all my life. I am the best asset to Thunderclan, all the clans know and fear my name. I should have been chosen.*

No, your not the evil, ambitious cat you used to be, act humble and happy for Lionheart..he deserves it, more than you, Tigerclaw sheathed his claws back in, he then felt a prickling feeling crawl up his spine, then turned as he felt a pair of eyes staring into his pelt, he saw Firepaw staring at him in suspicion. *I would look way right now kittypet, or you're going to get your first taste of blood.*

Just as Tigerclaw snapped his attention back to the meeting, Bluestar had dismissed the clan, she then jumped down from the rocks and told the clan, "Anyone closest to Redtail, it is time to sit

vigil for him. In the morning, the elders will bury him." Bluestar couched down beside Redtail's body, she rested her muzzle against his cold, lifeless fur and got comfortable, ready for the long night ahead.

The cats who gathered around him were; Willowpelt, Redtail's sister, Halftail, Redtail's old mentor, Dustpaw, Redtail's apprentice, Patchpelt, Redtail's brother, Brindleface, Redtail's old mate and Sandpaw, Redtail's daughter. The rest of the clan sadly said their last farewells to the dark tortoiseshell Tom, who resembled so much of the beautiful coat of Spottedleaf, who was his sister of course.

Just then, as if Spottedleaf had read his mind, she came bounding out of the medicine cat den and mournfully said her goodbyes to her brother, she couldn't sit vigil for him as she had to stay in the medicine cat den and treat any sick cats.

Tigerclaw didn't know what to do, just as he was about to retreat to the warriors den he saw his mate, Goldenflower padding over to him, she had a worried expression. Tigerclaw felt more at ease to see her. She was one of the few cats he could actually trust. They nuzzled each other and Goldenflower purred, glad that the big tom was alright.

Goldenflower rushed over to a quite corner in the camp and Tigerclaw followed, confused. He sat down, facing the she-cat and patiently waited for what she was going go say. She shuffled her paws nervously, her eyes were gleaming with both fear and excitement. *What was she about to say?* Tigerclaw wondered.

"I'm expecting kits, Tigerclaw, your kits. Goldenflower looked up at him. Tigerclaw felt his heart skip a beat. This meant only one thing...He was going to be a father.

Chapter 3

"Warriors gather round! It's time for the dawn patrol!" Lionheart's yowl woke Tigerclaw, he blinked open his eyes, adjusting to dim light of dawn.

He got up and stretched, letting out a big yawn. He noticed most of the other warriors had left the den already so Tigerclaw quickly padded out, joining the other warriors.

He saw his closest allies, Darkstripe and Longtail, he sat down next to them, greeting them both with a nod.

"Ok, Whitestorm, you can lead the patrol, take your apprentice Sandpaw, and Mousefur, Runningwind, Darkstripe and Tigerclaw." Lionheart nodded,

"Now I'm going to need to organise who Dustpaw's next mentor will be.." Tigerclaw pricked his ears, he through that Dustpaw would make a good warrior. *He was sensible young tom with lots of potential, he was strong.*

But I'm stuck with Ravenpaw, well atleast for now...Ravenpaw was going to be absent for apprentice training for a while with his injuries. Good thing too, he was terrible at everything, such a wimp! If anything, he should be a kittypet. Tigerclaw shook his head, getting up to meet up with the rest of the dawn patrol.

Whitestorm and his pale ginger apprentice, Sandpaw, were waiting by the thorn bush tunnel, Tigerclaw and Darkstripe joined them.

Though after just a few heartbeats Tigerclaw became restless, it was too cold to be standing out in camp doing nothing. Finally, the littermates, Runningwind and Mousefur came padding over. Whitestorm nodded to them and beckoned his tail to follow, one by one they all slipped through the tunnel out into the forest.

They had been padding along for awhile in silence, Darkstripe

seemed to have something on his mind, he was walking at the back of the party and every time Tigerclaw glanced back at him he was muttering to himself and casting quick glances at him. *Weirdo*.

Tigerclaw had caught a blackbird and a squirrel, Whitestorm caught a magpie, and Runningwind and Mousefur has both caught a squirrel and Darkstripe had caught a plump thrush, while Sandpaw had caught a mouse. *Sandpaw was going to be a fine warrior, just like Dustpaw she was sensible and had lots of potential.*

Tigerclaw had caught the most and he felt a rush of pride and ambition flood through his veins, he was always the best hunter and fighter in Thunderclan, Thistleclaw, his old mentor, had taught him well.

The patrol was starting to head back to camp then Tigerclaw slowed his pace to walk side by side with Darkstripe.

Darkstripe eye's focused on the path ahead of them, "I hope I become Dustpaw's mentor, he's a fine apprentice and i bet I could teach him well, after all, I'm the best warrior Thunderclan has!" Darkstripe reared up on his back legs, batting his forepaws high into the air, as if batting he were trying to whack the highest branches on the trees.

Tigerclaw rolled his eyes and snorted in disgust. "Oh please, you're not the *best* warrior of Thunderclan! I mean, I was your mentor..so obviously you'd be high up in the ranks..but me, Tigerclaw, is the strongest and most skilled warrior starclan has ever seen! One day I will be *Tigerstar* and not even starclan will control me!"

Tigerclaw felt blood roar in his ears and the fur along his spine rise, he slid his long serrated claws into the soft ground below him, imagining digging his claws into an enemy. The feel of warm blood welling up around his claws made him smile, but then he remembered Redtail and suddenly hesitated.

If he was to be leader one day, he should earn it by loyalty not bloodshed and fear. "But of course, loyalty is the number one asset a warrior must remember-" Tigerclaw tried to sound like a noble warrior like Whitestorm or Lionheart, but the way they spoke felt

weird coming out of his mouth.

Tigerclaw saw Darkatripe staring at him with an unreadable expression. *Is he suspicious of me? Or is he relishing my evil ways?* Tigerclaw shook his head.

Without saying anything he quickly padded on, catching up to the rest of the patrol just as they emerged into the clearing. Bluestar was jumping up onto the highrock and warriors were starting to gather around. The patrol quickly dropped their prey on the fresh-kill pile and hurried over to the others.

Just as Tigerclaw was about to sit down beside Longtail, his apprentice, Ravenpaw, came up beside him. "Tigerclaw, I need to speak with you.." he scuffled his paws nervously on the ground and glanced up anxiously at Tigerclaw.

What's his problem? Doesn't he know how to speak, for Starclan's sake! "Ok, but hurry," Tigerclaw huffed impatiently, getting up and padding over to a quiet corner in the camp. "What is it?" He snapped, looking down at the small, black apprentice.

Ravenpaw fixed his large green eyes on Tigerclaw. "I want to become a medicine cat apprentice"

Chapter 4

Ravenpaw spoke steadily, but Tigerclaw could smell the scent of fear pooling form his fur.

Tigerclaw felt a growl rise in his throat but he forcefully stopped it, he couldn't be angry at Ravenpaw, maybe his destiny was to become a medicine cat, Tigerclaw could definitely picture the young tom learning the ways of a medicine cat. He was terrible at training as a warrior.

He sighed. "Very well, we will discuss it with Bluestar and Spottedleaf after the clan meeting-"

"I already have. Bluestar has approved and Spottedleaf is going to train me for a while then I will become a full medicine cat apprentice." Ravenpaw spoke confidently now.

Tigerclaw nodded, a bit angered that they had discussed it without him. Both cats headed back to the meeting, Bluestar was speaking, about to name Dustpaw a new mentor.

Tigerclaw's pelt prickled with curiosity as he sat down beside Longtail, who acknowledged him with a small nod.

Tigerclaw looked around and saw Goldenflower near the nursery, she saw him looking at her and waved her tail at him, smiling. Tigerclaw gave a small smile and a little nod then turned his attention back to his leader.

"Darkstripe! Tigerclaw trained you well and you have grown into a fine warrior of Thunderclan, I expect you to pass your knowledge and skill down onto Dustpaw, and teach him the ways of the warrior code." Bluestar's voice rang through the camp.

Darkstripe stood up and padded over to the young Dustpaw, his tail high in the air as he touched noses with his new apprentice. Warriors around murmured happily and meowed their acceptance.

Tigerclaw didn't say anything. He didn't like the smug face that Darkstripe was wearing, he wished he could claw it off, along with his ego. *Stupid cat!*

Suddenly Bluestar's voice spoke out again and Tigerclaw saw Firepaw standing at the front of the gathered cats. "As you all know, Thunderclan has a new apprentice! This young tom has shown his strength and courage through battle, and will make a fine cat of Thunderclan.But he need a mentor, and I have chosen.

Now that Tigerclaw does not have an apprentice and Ravenpaw's warrior training has come to an end...

I think that Tigerclaw would best suit the position of Firepaw's mentor!" Bluestar's held her gaze on Tigerclaw. He felt his heart stop.

This cannot be true, I don't want that fat excuse of a cat as my apprentice, he so desperately wanted to yowl his protest and refuse Firepaw as his new apprentice but he couldn't do that in front of the whole clan, no way.

Tigerclaw slowly turned his gaze towards the bright ginger kittypet, Firepaw was staring straight at him through round eyes. Tigerclaw stared unblinkingly at him.

"Firepaw, it is time for you to learn the ways of the warrior code, you have shown the skill and determination of any clan cat, and it is now time to begin your training. May starclan guide your paws." Bluestar jumped down from the highrock and touched noses with Firepaw, he licked her shoulder in response. Bluestar then scanned the crowd of Thunderclan cats through narrowed eyes, challenge glinted in her eyes. Then she nodded,

"Tigerclaw, you are one of Thunderclan's best warriors and I expect you to pass on your strength and skill down onto Firepaw, may starclan guide your path." Bluestar nodded to him and gestured her

tail towards Firepaw and he begrudgingly padded towards the flame coloured Tom.

As Tigerclaw walked past his clan mates he saw Darkstripe staring at him mockingly, he let out a sneer and chuckled as he passed him. Tigerclaw felt his fur stand on end and as he passed the skinny dark tabby Tom, he whacked his tail across his muzzle, feeling satisfaction when he heard Darkstripe gasp in surprise.

Tigerclaw stopped infront of Firepaw and bent down to hesitantly touch noses with him, in the moment of contact Tigerclaw spoke quitly into his ear, "Looks like you're gonna' have to get used to me kittypet, because now you must do as *I* say." Tigerclaw quickly lifted his head and gazed down at his new apprentice, Firepaw's forest green eyes shined with resentment and determination to prove himself.

Tigerclaw felt the kittypet's green eyes strike at a memory, he turned his gaze onto Bluestar but then suddenly memories came rushing back to him.

A lithe black she-cat lapping gently at his fur with long gentle strokes, her scent wreathed around him, it was so familiar and welcoming.

He was so small, so helpless. Curled into a small ball of fluff, wriggling up to the warm dark fur of her belly when he was hungry.

Though there was a disturbance outside his little world in the small den he shared with his mother. The outside was so big, so bright and even dangerous. A big dark brown-ginger tom leapt down from the tall rock he stood upon. Cats around him yowled their protest and some gasped in shock, it was all chaos.

The muscles in his mother tensed, her tail curling around him protectively, he felt his ears ring as he heard the pain in her voice, her sadness and love was so intense he was almost swept from his feet. The big ginger-brown tom leaned down, his familiar scent streamed into Tigerkit's nose and he leaned forwards, towards his father.

The tom's round forest green eyes stared at him. The words from the big tom's jaws were blurred and Tigerkit felt so many emotions flooding from him. Sadness, loss, anger, pain, sorrow and even guilt. Tigerkit felt his jaws ache and his legs tremble, the warmth of his fathers fur was replaced by cold emptiness and loneliness.

He was so vulnerable and afraid. The taunts by his fellow clanmates filled his brain with sadness and longing, but over the moons it changed to anger and hatred.

His father left him and his mother alone, to become a kittypet, he abandoned Tigerkit, his mother, his clan and the warrior code! *I will always hate him for what he caused!*

Chapter 5

"Ok everyone, we have now arrived at the sandy hollow. This is where you will practice your fighting skills." Lionheart padded slowly around the clearing, his tail gesturing to the centre of the clearing where Firepaw and Graypaw sat.

Tigerclaw looked at the two apprentices then to Lionheart, to which nodded at him.

"Ok, first I'll show you guys a trick you can use when battling any cat," Tigerclaw leapt towards Lionheart, who was standing square, ready for the attack. Tigerclaw lightly batted at the deputy with sheathed paws then let him pin him down. Tigerclaw fell limp as if he were defeated, then as soon as Lionheart's grip loosened he struck out at him. He kicked him off with his powerful hind legs and, taking advantage of Lionheart's surprise, quickly leapt onto him, shoving him to the ground and holding him there.

Tigerclaw slid off the big golden Tom, then looked towards the watching apprentices. "So, when your attacker has you pinned down, fall limp and pretend to be defeated, then when they loosen their grip, you strike out at them! It's a massive advantage in any fight. Now you two try it," Tigerclaw sat down, putting his tail neatly over his paws.

Graypaw and Firepaw stood on opposites of the hollow, facing each other. Their eyes glimmered with eagerness and their tails lashed against the warm leaf-fall breeze.

"Now!" Lionheart yowled aloud and the two apprentices shot out at each other.

Graypaw reared on his hind legs and charged towards the orange tabby. But Firepaw was nimble and easily dodged pass him, but his lack of practice made him clumsy and uncoordinated. He tripped

over his paws and went tumbling.

"Get up, Firepaw! A kit could have won by now!" Tigerclaw shouted at the apprentice, a growl rising in his throat.

Firepaw's shot back up but he was too slow, Graypaw crashed straight into him, pinning him down, his large body making it almost impossible for Firepaw to get free.

Then, remembering the move, Firepaw fell limp and after a few heartbeats Tigerclaw saw Graypaw loosen his grip. All of a sudden, Firepaw screeched and flashed out with his paws. He kicked and batted at Graypaw, making the grey tom fall back in surprise. Then, taking the advantage, he lept onto Graypaw and clinged to his back, nipping at his ears. Eventually Graypaw gave up and Firepaw pinned him down, holding his jaws to Graypaw's throat.

"Good job Firepaw! All is well, though you need to work on your agility and your speed-" Lionheart was cutted off.

"All is well!?" Hah! And might hedgehogs fly! Firepaw still has MANY more things he has to work on, his strikes are slow. And he is far too floppy on his feet, even a Riverclan kit could beat him in a race. And don't even get me started on-"

"That's quite enough, Tigerclaw," Lionheart stared sternly at Tigerclaw. "Firepaw has lots of potential, and remember, this is only his first training session." The deputy nodded to the orange apprentice who blinked with appreciation. "Also, you did very well, Graypaw! Your strength is coming along well, but you need to stay motivated on the fight and keep practicing so you'll have enough energy to finish it."

Tigerclaw snorted, mentors should always be harsh on their apprentices, it's the only way that they're gonna' learn. Tigerclaw saw Firepaw staring at him, but he couldn't read his expression. Tigerclaw sighed, perhaps he was being a little *too* harsh. "You have good reflexes, it gives you a good advantage." Tigerclaw simply murmured then followed Lionheart and Graypaw further into the forest.

* * *

"Ok, now onto hunting, one of the most important aspect of clan life. It provides food and survival to everyone in your clan," Tigerclaw paced around a small clearing in the forest. "The hunters crouch....watch and learn"

Tigerclaw focused his sight onto a leaf lying on the other side of the clearing. He crouched down, his haunches and shoulders kept slow and his tail was only half a whisker away from the ground, careful not to brush anything.

He crept along, his paws no lighter than a feather, when he was close enough he wriggled his haunches, tensing and soaking energy into his back legs. Then with a mighty leap, he jumped perfectly onto the leaf, as quick as a rabbit. The bit down on it as if killing a squirrel or mouse.

He turned back to the apprentice who were looking at him in awe. Pride flickered in Tigerclaw's chest. "Now it's your turn, remember to keep your tail down, but don't drag it along the ground or you'll scare everything away. And keep your paw movements slow, focus on where you're putting them, but always keep your eyes on what you're aiming for so your jump at the very last second is accurate."

Lionheart nodded to him and watched as the apprentices mimicked Tigerclaw's crouch.

Graypaw kept low, but his big paws made his slow movements hard and he almost tripped on them a couple of times. As well as his tail grazing ever so slightly on the ground. He jumped up but misjudged the landing and jumped too far.

Lionheart blinked slowly and Graypaw looked up at his mentor. "I messed it up, didn't I?" He meowed quietly, but amusement flickered in his eyes amber, yellow eyes and Lionheart replied. "Just a bit. Better luck next time. You need to get used to your size and adjust your crouch until it feels right, and lift your tail a little higher."

Tigerclaw turned to look at his apprentice, Firepaw.

Firepaw crouched down, he slowly moved along the ground, he moved swiftly but neat and Tigerclaw was impressed when he saw no stumbling movements. His tail held just above the ground then Tigerclaw saw him wriggle his haunches, the way Tigerclaw had done. *At least he listens*, Tigerclaw thought.

Then Firepaw leapt towards the stick he had been hunting. But at the last second his tail grazed the ground and made a rustling noise, then he also jumped too short, landing a mouse length away from the stick.

"Dang it!" Firepaw looked up at Tigerclaw with disappointment, but the flame in his eyes didn't fade.

"That was..okay, you got the crouch right, surprisingly. But at the last second you made a lot of noise, which was sure to alert you prey AND you misjudged the jump. But it was actually *alright* for your first attempt." Tigerclaw admitted, licking his ears to hide how embarrassed he was from actually complimenting the kittypet. Firepaw's eyes lit up, "Thank you, Tigerclaw. I'll be sure to work on it."

Tigerclaw nodded briefly, "Also, another thing. Make sure to always stay down wind from your prey, if they can smell you before you even start hunting them, then you'll never catch anything."

* * *

Tigerclaw, led the two apprentices back to camp, with Lionheart at the rear. They emerged into camp and all was peaceful.

Tigerclaw felt his paws ache from all walking and grabbed two mice from the fresh-kill pile. He walked over to the nursery, nodding to Whitestorm as he padded past him.

He emerged though the small entrance and adjusted his eyes to the dim glow of the nursery, he saw Frostfur, Speckletail and Brindleface all curled up on a bed each, they looked asleep, which would make sense as the sun had almost set.

Tigerclaw then saw a golden furred she-cat slowly grooming herself

on the far side of the den. Tigerclaw padded up to her, careful not to disturb the other queens.

The golden she-cat turned and her eyes lit up as she saw him and he quietly purred as he reached her. The two rubbed muzzles then Tigerclaw dropped the mice at her paws. "Oh, thank you, I had forgotten how hungry I was." She purred then started to gulp down the mouse, and Tigerclaw did the same.

After they had both finished their meal Tigerclaw lied down close to her, licking her forehead rhythmically until she fell asleep. Tigerclaw would usually feel embarrassed to show affection to his mate, but he did love Goldenflower, and no one could really see him in here anyways.

Tigerclaw imagined their future kits tumbling around in the nursery. They would be as strong and skilled as he was and as beautiful as Goldenflower. Tigerclaw slowly lowered his head beside his mate's and felt his eyes closing. "Goodnight, Goldenflower," he softly murmured before he fell into deep slumber.

Chapter 6

It's been 1 moon. Lionheart and Tigerclaw have been training Graypaw and Firepaw most days. *They have improved quite a bit.* Tigerclaw thought to himself.

Ok, that was an understatement..,Firepaw has improved expediently. He's almost perfected the hunters crouch and is always working to improve on any new move I introduce to him. Tigerclaw shook his head as he felt a warm feeling rising in his chest, *what was it? Pride?*

Tigerclaw dismissed the thought as he kept on padding on.

He walked next to Whitestorm and Darkstripe silently. They were returning from a late hunting patrol with their apprentices, Dustpaw, Sandpaw and Firepaw.

Firepaw seemed to be lagging behind though, something was off.

"Ackk!" Tigerclaw growled in surprise.

He whipped around as quick as a rabbit, flaring his nostrils.

"Sorry Tigerclaw! I didn't mean it, I just tripped and stepped on your tail!" Sandpaw raised one of her paws in defence.

Dustpaw snickered beside her.

Tigerclaw just puffed out a long breath of annoyance, slowly turning back to keep walking with the other two mentors.

As they kept on walking Tigerclaw kept on hearing laughter and hisses of mockery from behind him, it was Sandpaw and Dustpaw again. *What are those two mouse brains doing now?*

As Tigerclaw turned around to confront the pair he saw how far back they were, right back with Firepaw.

The two were laughing and had positioned themselves either side of Firepaw and were walking beside him, every so often they used their tails or paws to trip the orange tabby.

Dustpaw went for it, leaning out his back paw he kicked away Firepaw's back leg. Firepaw yelped in surprise and instead of tripping, he fully fell flat on the ground, landing with an "Oof!".

Sandpaw and Dustpaw burst out laughing and ran ahead, unaware Tigerclaw was blocking their path.

They ran straight into his chest, looking up with surprise. Tigerclaw leaned down with his teeth bared.

"What. In Starclan do you think that little stunt you pulled back there was?" You really think it would go unnoticed, huh?" Tigerclaw hissed into their faces.

As neither of them replied but just sat there with wide eyes, Tigerclaw continued. "You both need to pull your stupid head out of ya' tails! Ya hear me?!" Tigerclaw yelled.

"I said, DO YOUS HERE ME!!?" Tigerclaw leaned forwards, head butting them both onto the ground. They landed on their hindquarters, eyes as wide as the moon on a gathering.

Dustpaw gulped, "Yes, Tigerclaw we hear you!"

Sandpaw stood next to him, "We're sorry, we won't do it again. Please don't tell Whitestorm!"

"Or Darkstripe!" Dustpaw butted in.

Tigerclaw glared into their eyes. "Yous misalign again, and it's right back to the nursery."

The two nodded and ran off with their tails between their legs.

"Tigerclaw?" Firepaw warily approached him, he had dust smeared all over his chest fur from the fall.

"Come." Tigerclaw began to walk and Firepaw caught up to him,

stepping in besides his large mentor.

They walked in silence for a few moments.

"Don't let them get to your head, kittypet" Tigerclaw grunted, glancing down at the orange tabby beside him.

Firepaw breathed in a trembly sigh, "I try..but it's..it's hard." He sounded as if he were on the verge of tears.

Tigerclaw stopped walking and sat down, Firepaw just stood with his head hung low.

"Listen," Tigerpaw lifted his tail and patted Firepaw on his shoulder, "What's life without the challenges? There's always going to be something that's trying to get you down. There's no escaping it, no matter how strong, big, liked, or even kind you are..."

Firepaw lifted his head gently to face Tigerclaw, his emerald green eyes shimmered in the sunset as tears lined his eyelids.

"...But there two things you can do. Either let them get to you, make your life a misery, and hang your head low. Or... you can keep our head high, don't let them get to you no matter how hard they try to make your life a living misery. It's hard, I get it, kittypet." Tigerclaw paused, looking Firepaw in the yes. "But you're strong. If any apprentice can keep going, it's you."

Firepaw stared at Tigerclaw with wide green eyes, a single tear ran down his cheek. Suddenly Firepaw leaned into Tigerclaw's chest.

Tigerclaw let out a silent gasp, he hesitated but then raised his large paw to pat the back of Firepaw.

"Thank you Tigerclaw." Firepaw leaned away and gave a small smile.

The orange tabby Tom stood up and shook his fur, dust flew from his chest as he puffed it out and held his head high, he then continued forwards, running back to camp.

Tigerclaw stared after him, "No worries...

..Firepaw."

Chapter 7

Tigerclaw finally emerged into the camp after what felt like ages of walking, he couldn't stop thinking about how Firepaw has been so comfortable around him, to show that much vulnerability.

Maybe Tigerclaw wasn't so bad after all?

The large dark brown tabby tom padded over to the pile of freshkill in the centre of camp, he saw Graypaw and Firepaw eating and talking together by the apprentice stump. Dustpaw and Sandpaw nowhere to be seen. *Hah I really did scare em' off, didn't I?*

Tigerclaw nosed his way through the pile, flicking his tail with delight when he found what he was looking for. It was a nice plump vole, it was fresh too, he could still feel the warmth of the animal as he picked it up gently in his jaws.

As much as his mouth watered, this wasn't for him.

Tigerclaw made his way over to the nursery, instantly spotting the fluffy, golden coat of his mate.

Goldenflower lifted her head, she smiled warmly as he greeted her, dropping the vole at her paws. "For you, my love."

"Oh, thank you Tigerclaw. And my favourite too!" She purred.

He gave a quick lick to her forehead, noticing how swollen her belly was looking already. She's been in the nursery for a a moon and a half now. *Maybe another 2 moons until the kits arrive?* Tigerclaw thought with a sudden rush of excitement.

"Well, you enjoy the fresh-kill and make sure to get plenty of sleep. I'm gonna' go have some fresh-kill.

"Ok, see you, Tigerclaw" She smiled.

"See you later" He let out a low purr.

Tigerclaw had grabbed himself a squirrel and joined Darkstripe and Longtail under the highrock in their usual spot in the shade.

Longtail was talking. "Have you seen Shadowclan lately? There has been so many border skirmishes with them, they always find a way to make everything into a fight!"

Tigerclaw nodded, "hmmyes..and they've doubled up on border patrols too. There's always at-least two cats monitoring their border lately. I personally think it's something to do with Brokenstar.."

Darkstripe immediately flicked his ears up in interest as Tigerclaw mentioned the Shadowclan leader.

"What do you mean? Aren't they allowed to have more border patrols? I mean, what else are the borders for? Pfft.. If anything, I think we should be learning from Shadowclan, the way to go is always have patrols checking the border." Darkstripe stated, narrowing his eyes at the two.

"NO!" Tigerclaw mocked the skinny greyish-black, tabby Tom. "Unless you want to exhaust the clan then go ahead! That's the stupidest idea..not surprised though, coming from you." Longtail rumbled in laughter and Tigerclaw snickered quietly, he loved picking on Darkstripe, he deserved it.

"Hmph! WELL-" Darkstripe stood up, about to make a point but nothing came out.

"Uhh..yeah? What's the point you trynna make fluffbutt? C'mon, spit it out, we don't have all day", Longtail mocked Darkstripe for having nothing to say.

"No no...he can't spit it out! What Darkstripe...mouse got ya tongue??" Tigerstar bellowed with laughter.

"Yeah, yeah..it was the mouse he ate! It's got his tongue! Oooo be careful Darkstripe! It might still be alive in there! HAH- HAH-HAHAHHHHH!!" Longtail howled with laughter.

"I mean, it's likely the mouse wasn't even killed properly, you were the one to catch it, right Darkstripe?! Do you need to work on your hunters couch!? I'll take you with me next time I go to train Firepaw! Maybe the kittypet can teach ya, he seems to be better than you anyways!!" Tigerstar slammed the ground with his paw as he laughed uncontrollably.

"OOOOOOOooohhhhhh! DAMN! The kittypet's better than you! That's saying something!! BAHAHAhahah!! "Longtail rolled onto his side laughing.

Every corner of Darkstripe's face trembled with anger, the skinny greyish-black Tom lashed his tail from sight to side with fury. He stormed off without another word.

Longtail and Tigerclaw watched him go, their laughter finally dying down.

"Well..don't know what his problem was in the first place. It's like he's in love with Brokenstar and shadowclan. Uuuueeeghhhhhh.....", Longtail stared blankly at the ground, "I'll go talk to him later.."

"Pfft..I won't," Tigerclaw stood up, stretching with a twinge of pain seared up his paw as he unsheathed his claws. *Ah, a prickle. I'll probably go have to get that checked out before it gets any worse.*. Tigerclaw yawned, beckoning goodbye with his tail at Longtail as he padded off to the medicine cats den.

He emerged into the peacefully lit den. The last remnants of the sunset filtered through the canopy like roof, creating pools of sunlight along the floor of the den.

Spottedleaf was at the back of the den, tending to an elder, her ears flickered as she heard Tigerclaw enter but she didn't turn around. "Ravenpaw, can you tend to the next patient!"

"On it!" A small black apprentice padded from around the corner of the den, his tail held high with herbs held in his small jaws. The apprentice looked up, his eyes widening as he was Tigerclaw waiting there.

"Tigerclaw.."

"Hi Ravenpaw." Tigerclaw wondered why the black apprentice was staring at him as if he'd just killed a cat.

Suddenly Tigerstar's brain clicked. He remembered..

After he had killed Redtail on the day of the fight for Sunningrocks, he had seen a cat in the bushes for a split second.

Tigerclaw remembered to vividly the eyes of the only cat who really new the truth about that day.. and those same eyes were staring right at him right now, with the same fear they had during they murder.

No..no.. it can't be. It can't be Ravenpaw..that means..HE KNOWS. He knows my dark secret i thought I only shared with my guilty conscience!

Tigerclaw expressed nothing of his inner turmoil onto his face, but stared blankly at the black apprentice.

Tigerclaw held out his paw, revealing the deeply buried prickle between two of his paw pads. "It's stuck."

Ravenpaw hesitated at first but quickly examined Tigerclaw's paw, rushing into the back of the den, soon returning with a few leaves. He placed them onto the ground beside him.

Ravenpaw leaned down and gently but accurately bit down onto the prickle wedged in Tigerclaw's paw. The apprentice pulled it out efficiency, disposing it into the corner of the den.

Ravenpaw then put the leaves in his mouth, chewing them for a few moments before spitting them back out onto his paw, the leaves were paste looking now.

The apprentice speared the paste where the prickle had been.

"Thank you...feels better already.." Tigerclaw avoided eye contact with the apprentice, he couldn't bare to look at his eyes for any longer.

"Get some sleep as soon as possible, you're allowed to walk around, just no excessive activity, but it should be back to normal in the morning." Ravenpaw finished.

"Thanks." Tigerclaw departed the den, and as he did he was met with Lionheart and Bluestar waiting for him.

"Tigerclaw", Bluestar dipped her head in greetings, "Just wanted to inform you; you and Lionheart will take Firepaw and Graypaw for their first solo hunt tomorrow morning."

Tigerclaw nodded and the two left, padding away, deep in conversation.

Tigerclaw couldn't think about that..all he could think about is how Ravenpaw knows...

Ravenpaw knows i was the one who murdered Redtail that day...